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ABSTRACT

This booklet outlines specific strategies to help teachers prepare an effective self-study course for students enrolled in nontraditional study. The guide is organized in four chapters that cover the following topics: (1) consideration of students and their motivation; (2) preparation of an effective course (conceptualization--goals, expectations, requirements); (3) preparation of the course study guide (perspective and the road map, introduction to the course, lesson objectives, reading assignments, lesson commentary, structuring assignments to be submitted, structuring examinations, and learning aids and format cues); and (4) support for students' work. Eight appendixes provide samples and information on consideration of students and their motivation; specifying goals, expectations, and requirements; course introductions; stating lesson objectives; lesson commentaries: effective transitions; examples of assignments; learning aids and format cues; and responses to students. A 10-item bibliography completes the guide. (KC)

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Preparing An Effective Self-Study Course

Prepared by
Morris Sammons
and Charles E. Kozoll

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Introduction

Time, busy schedules, and distance are three of the reasons why full- and part-time students find nontraditional study attractive. Today, there are numerous ways to learn alone. Television courses, computer-assisted programs, and videotapes are good examples. When systematically and carefully developed, self-study courses involve and motivate learners through a package of specially designed instructional materials. As a teacher of a self-study course, you have both the opportunity and the challenge to construct a comprehensive and interesting course.

In this booklet, we will outline specific strategies for preparing an effective self-study experience for everyone who enrolls. Three aspects will be stressed: (a) the importance of students and their motivation to enroll, (b) the consideration of this understanding when organizing and preparing the course, and (c) the implementation of special techniques that provide and maintain support for students.

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Increasingly today, adults with job, school, and family responsibilities will find self-study courses a convenient way to advance and to continue their education. In some cases, an entire graduate degree or, at least a major portion of it, can be completed off campus. On occasion, certain credit courses combine independent study with traditional class sessions.

Often, professionals in certain fields are required to complete initial or ongoing certification requirements and find that a self-study course best fits their busy schedule. Because taking several days or a week off to attend a course or workshop just isn't possible, they can complete self-study assignments when time is available. (Many of these courses are developed by national associations and are made available to their membership.)

Statistics show that individuals of all ages, from early 20s to late 70s will enroll in a wide variety of self-improvement programs. These programs may provide written material, audio cassettes, computer disks, or videotapes. An opportunity for stimulation through exposure to new ideas and the perspective of recognized experts are two reasons why individuals participate in self-improvement programs. These individuals particularly value the personalized attention and, often, the privacy this type of learning provides. Lacking confidence, they may prefer working alone. For those who have been away from education for any period of time, self-study is an effective reintroduction to the discipline needed to complete course work.

Motivating Forces

Many full- and part-time students who have completed one or more nontraditional independent study courses enjoy this method of learning. Usually, they are self-disciplined and motivated to work alone without prodding. With little difficulty, these students are able to develop good study and time management habits, and with personalized attention from the instructor, they are able to succeed in the course.

Other students will not be as well-prepared and may find the experience difficult. They have relied on contact with an instructor to maintain interest in a course and competition with other students to prepare for class sessions and examinations. However, if they have basically sound study and time management skills, their transition to independent study can be accomplished without too much difficulty. Your assistance will be important, especially during the beginning stages of the course.

A third group of students will struggle and possibly drop out because working alone is extremely difficult and frustrating. Putting off work until the last minute, the majority of them quit after leaving the first or second lesson incomplete. Procrastination puts them far behind; embarrassment may cause them to give up. You may be able to assist a few of these students but avoid undue optimism about changing their bad habits.

Your effort in encouraging your students to combine a positive attitude with a realistic routine is one way you can address the potential procrastination/drop-out problem. Your instructional material must contain not only a well-written series of lectures, but encouragement that guides and motivates students. This encouragement, in particular, remains a vital aspect of your work as an independent study instructor.

Building Motivation

Instructor responsiveness is a key factor to an effective self-study course because it enhances students' motivation. Sensitivity to students' unique situation makes responsiveness possible.

To develop sensitivity to students, *first*, try to visualize your students' apprehension. Imagine how those learning alone might feel when they receive a large course syllabus, assignment notebook, and textbook. The combination of material, delivered at one time, can seem insurmountable, even for the most motivated.

Second, remember that students must balance your course with other full-time responsibilities. For those who effectively juggle many demands, this will not be a problem. Procrastination remains a problem for many, however, because other responsibilities can take precedence. Because class preparation is not necessary, much of the motivation to continue working comes from your indications of progress for each completed assignment.

Third, be aware of how your written reactions to a student's work could be interpreted. Those experienced instructors of self-study courses who we consulted paid special attention to this point. In a face-to-face setting, much criticism is negotiated in order to avoid hurting a student's feelings or creating a negative reaction. Words are softened and support is added to encourage continued effort. In a self-study course, you will have to blend constructive criticism and support in writing.

Fourth, realize that students who work alone need constant feedback on their progress, however slow or tenuous that progress may seem. In the traditional classroom that feedback is direct, stemming from correct responses to questions or through the realization they knew answers another student provided. In contrast, self-study students must wait to hear from you, through written reactions alone, to sense progress. Therefore,

the less time allowed between assignment completion and your feedback, the greater the possibility of increased attention to your reactions and added importance to your support of their efforts. Your reactions and critique of each assignment are measurements of achievement and must be worded carefully. Equally significant is your praise of their tenacity and ability to establish the necessary routine to successfully complete a self-study course.

Summary and Recommendation

As you begin to organize your self-study course, it is important to consider the learning situation of the students with whom you will be working, the character of the teaching situation you are in, and the implications for interaction and communication of these situations. Although all your students will receive the same instructional materials, the students themselves will vary greatly in age, educational background, and circumstance. Their motivation to manage the conditions of nontraditional study will also vary. Because the situation is a nontraditional, nonpersonal one, students will rely heavily on interaction with you. By being responsive to the following ideas for effective interaction, you can significantly promote student learning:

- Learn something about your students.
- Make necessary adjustments for individual students to promote learning.
- Interact with students on a personal basis.
- Respond to students' work and questions promptly.
- Provide much feedback to students on their progress.

(Refer to Appendix 1, page 21, for suggestions for interacting with students)

Chapter 2

Preparation of an Effective Course

Four distinct elements contribute to an effective independent study course and will be examined in detail. Each deserves special attention as you prepare course material and as you work with students. Unlike students in face-to-face courses who depend on their instructors to clarify and to correct at individual course sessions, independent study students are totally dependent on written guidance. For this reason the following elements become critical:

1. A well-conceived course plan with precise goals, content, and requirements clearly explained
2. Material in addition to a text that maps the route to be followed, highlights important aspects of the course, and keeps students on track while working alone
3. Challenging but accessible assignments that enable students to demonstrate *and* feel they have mastered each portion of the course
4. Prompt, carefully prepared and substantially supportive feedback that tells students they are on track, doing well, or in need of further effort and assistance

Conceptualization of Goals, Expectations, Requirements

Bearing in mind why students enroll in nontraditional, independent study courses and the difficulties they face completing them, think about how *your course* could be organized to build on motivation and to account for the challenges of learning alone.

Experienced instructors have emphasized the importance of giving information on goals, expectations, and requirements to students. By pointing out these specifics, reference points are established for students to consult.

Goals. State the goals of the course explicitly. If possible, include statements of what students will be able to do with the knowledge they've acquired by completing the course. Students can then measure their general progress in the course by referring to the stated goals.

Expectations. Communicate your personal expectations for the course and for students' performance. Knowing that you are personally interested in the course and in their work will show students that you are seriously involved in the course and that you are inviting them to be seriously involved with you. Communication of your expectations is the key to further positive interaction.

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Requirements. By making the course requirements explicit, you present a realistic picture of the details of the course. Some experienced instructors even indicate how much time the average student needs to spend to successfully complete the lessons. Self-study students need to plan carefully for their study because it has to be scheduled with their other activities and responsibilities. The more information they have about the time and effort required to do the course work, the better their planning can be.

Summary and Recommendations

It is crucial that the course be well planned and organized and that the organizational scheme be apparent to students. Explicitly stating your goals, expectations, and requirements for the course is the first step toward making your organizational scheme clear. To maintain coherence and consistency, you can follow your organizational scheme as you prepare the pieces of the study guide.

(Refer to Appendix 2, page 23, for examples of specifying goals, expectations, and requirements.)

Chapter 3

Preparation of the Course Study Guide

The course study guide is the most important piece of instructional resource of any self-study course because of the many purposes it serves. The study guide (a) directs students through the course content and assignments; (b) guides students' reflection about the subject matter, engaging them in study; and (c) teaches students the subject matter. A study guide is effective only when it is structured to accomplish all of the above.

Nontraditional, self-study courses usually emphasize comprehension of basic content. Although study guides present the subject matter in a straightforward way, the presentation of subject matter in the study guide should also be appropriate for the learning conditions presented by self-study.

Perspective and the Road Map

Before beginning to draft the guide, first determine what your priorities are for the course and how students will demonstrate competence. You should also provide answers to the following questions:

- What are the central concepts of your course?
- What material has to be covered?
- What will a student know or be able to do on completion of the course?

Once you decide on your primary ideas and goals, you can begin to organize the material for presentation. By determining in what order the ideas should be studied, you establish the logical order and sequence of what is to be learned. *This order and sequence is the conceptual road through the subject matter.* Next, you begin to develop the map to guide students along the road.

Introduction to the Course

The first step toward developing a map that guides students' study and learning is to provide them with basic information about the map and how to use it. This is the purpose of the introduction to the course.

A structured introduction does not merely give specifications for assignments and details of your grading scheme; it is not merely a set of procedural details. A structured introduction presents your perspective on the subject material and on teaching it in such a way that students are informed and encouraged to proceed. You can do this by making your awareness of the students' isolated situations evident in what you say and how you say it. That is, you need to constantly keep the student in mind.

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Including specific references and allusions to the conditions of independent study in your introduction will make your awareness evident.

The well-structured introduction includes the following information:

1. An explanation of the aim and scope of the course. Clearly lay out the stages or phases of the course. Provide students with a clear picture of your perspective on the course. (i.e., how the material fits into the context of the discipline or subject area from which it comes and the basics of your interpretation of the material).

(Refer to Appendix 3, page 25, for excerpts from course introductions that contain explanations of the role and scope of several courses.)

2. Biographical material. A short biographical section about you will help soften the impersonal aspects of nontraditional, independent study. Besides your academic background, include some personal information as well. You might also ask students to volunteer some personal information about themselves. This will show that you are truly interested in them and will also give you some insight about their learning situation. Although not directly related to mastering the course material, exchanging bits of personal information is an important aspect of the course study guide and especially of the introduction. The more you can project yourself to students, the easier it will be for them to interact with you, to ask questions, and to make unsolicited comments about the course and the material. With little or no interaction, motivation is jeopardized and the incentive to learn is reduced.

3. Procedures. An explanation of course procedures is of critical importance in a nontraditional, independent study course. Students have to know what they are expected to do and how they are to do it. Any lack of information about course procedures may aggravate students' insecurities and anxieties about the course. They need to know how you expect them to perform and how to manage the inherent mechanics of the course.

A complete explanation of procedures includes:

- a description of the kind of work they are to do (write essays, answer problems, answer objective questions, etc.);
- your criteria for grading lessons;
- methods for communicating and handling student questions;
- types of exams;
- grade determination: what percentage of the grade is based on lesson assignments and exams; and
- special suggestions or tips for working through lessons (what lessons are harder or require more work, how to carefully plan for completion, etc).

After completing all the other components of the study guide, review

the draft of the introduction to decide what additions and changes may be needed. After preparing a complete draft of the study guide, you may formulate new ideas about the course, the study guide, and your approach to the course content. Any new ideas should be added in the introduction.

(Refer to Appendix 3, page 25, for excerpts from course introductions.)

Lesson Objectives

Clearly stated objectives indicate what is to be learned, for example, facts, concepts, or techniques. Clearly stated objectives also indicate what type of learning process is involved, for example, problem solving, recall, analysis, or interpretation. By stating the objectives, you direct students through the subject matter. By preparing specific objectives, you guide their study toward basic parts of the lesson and make their study a more manageable task. You also provide a self-checking device for them. They can more easily determine if they have mastered the content of the lesson by checking whether they can complete the objectives. By stating clear objectives for the lessons, you have begun to structure the material of the study guide to facilitate students' learning.

(Refer to Appendix 4, page 31, for examples of stating lesson objectives.)

Text Selection and Reading Assignments

Selecting the appropriate text. From among familiar textbooks that cover your course subject matter, choose a book (or books) that examines your course material as thoroughly as possible. Try to find a thorough text that is well-suited for independent study, a text with a clearly presented, well-organized structure of ideas and features that will facilitate students' study. Because the text presents the content of the subject material, high readability is an important characteristic of texts for independent study. Keep in mind that students will be relying heavily on the text for the content of the course. Their reading will be supplemented by your commentary in the study guide, but they will not have the benefit of lectures or of interaction with you or other classmates. Similarly, a text with learning aids such as outlines of chapters and units, study question following each chapter, and a thoroughly prepared index will be of help to the student studying alone.

A book that presents the material in an interesting way is, of course, valuable for a nontraditional independent study course. If there are special features of the text, such as thought-provoking questions, side-line commentary on relevant topics, or useful graphics and illustrations, then that text should be carefully considered. With these special learning aids, students are drawn to a deeper level of concentration on the content.

Keep in mind the following practical considerations when selecting a

text: (a) Is the text readily available for purchase? (b) Is the text a current edition or is a current edition available? and (c) Is the text currently in print and will it remain in print for several semesters?

Determining reading assignments. Equally important to choosing a text for the course is determining the reading assignments. The amount of required reading material is a critically important factor for a nontraditional, independent study course. The reading assignments must be sufficient to cover the material without being unmanageable for the student. Requiring what is usually assigned in a week for a classroom course is generally appropriate. Requiring an amount of reading in several books that is disproportionately large compared to the amount of content covered can cause problems for the course. The progress of students who have many other responsibilities, who work more slowly, or who are less academically able, may be stymied by large reading assignments.

The principle to follow in making reading assignments is to ensure that the fundamental ideas of the lesson are adequately covered. Other reading can be made optional. The number of pages is relative to the subject matter and the complexity of the reading. Less reading is usually required for a math course (e.g., 20 pages per week) than in a literature or history course (e.g., 50-100 pages per week.) However, practice problems can be suggested in courses requiring applications, such as math and accounting.

Planning the reading assignments so that the ideas of the lesson are covered concisely facilitates comprehension in independent study. Requiring reading from several books that cover the same points risks making the reading assignment cumbersome and discouraging to students. Reading assignments from one or possibly two books for any one lesson presents students with a manageable amount of work to fit into their busy schedules. If a topic requires a large amount of reading and study, then either divide a lesson into two parts or use two lessons. To promote students' progress in the course and to maintain their interest, the reading assignments must be presented as manageable tasks.

Lesson Commentary

After formulating the goals and objectives for a lesson and deciding on the material to be covered you are ready to prepare your commentary on each lesson. This element is your individual lecture to students. Through your commentary, you emphasize particular points and guide students through the material. You indicate to them the "landmarks" they should learn in order to make their way through the lesson.

To achieve heightened clarity, attempt to make abstract ideas more concrete. Commentaries generally include many examples of significant concepts, definitions of terms, and detailed explanations of important points. These and other specifics make abstract ideas concrete. This, of

course, is especially helpful to independent study students who have only the materials and their own minds to use in comprehending the subject material.

Within each lesson commentary, set the conceptual stage as follows:

1. Present the theme of the lesson. Identify in general the theme, or what they will be studying in the lesson. In presenting the theme of the lesson, it is most important that you relate the lesson to the course as a whole and to the preceding and following lessons specifically.

2. Provide transitions among lessons. Your roadmap gets more detailed as the conceptual terrain becomes more complex. By including effective transitions from lesson to lesson, students gain a sense of movement through course material and fix their current position relative to what has gone before and what will come after.

3. Attend carefully to the first lessons. Pay special attention to commentary for the first three lessons. At this point, students are forming their initial and most significant impressions of the course. Some will be uncertain about their ability to complete the course and/or to work with an instructor who is a name only. With positive reinforcement from you, a more enthusiastic beginning is likely.

4. Present a personal approach. Describe how you will teach them. Students will be affected by the tone of your comments, so a personal approach is helpful. Also, introducing the subject material in appropriately simple terms enhances this personal approach.

5. Establish continuity. Referring to ideas from the immediately preceding lessons and explaining their relationship to the new lesson indicates a transition and guides students thinking about the ideas. The appropriate place to emphasize this continuity is in the commentary. Independent study students work at their own pace. The time between completing an assignment for submission and the time spent reading and studying for the next lesson may vary. Also, because there are no regular classes or lectures to attend, continuity must be built into the lesson.

(Refer to Appendix 5, page 33, for examples of effective lesson commentaries.)

Structuring Assignments To Be Submitted

To engage students in learning, the assignments should present problems to be solved. Assignments that require students to relate and to use ideas from the lesson promote learning. When students are asked to analyze ideas and make judgments about their assigned material, they must immerse into the lesson. Assignments involving problem solving,

such as math courses, should require students to show their complete solutions, not just answers.

In structuring student assignments to be submitted, incorporate the following:

1. Correlate assignments to lesson objectives. Assignments students are to submit should correspond directly to the objectives of each lesson. Correspondence with the objectives ensures that your feedback on the assignments is connected directly to what the students are to gain from the lesson.

2. Formulate assignments that can be accurately evaluated. Of critical importance in an independent study course is that lesson assignments be designed so that students' progress can be determined and that meaningful feedback can be provided. Present tasks that can be evaluated for student comprehension as well as tasks for which accurate evaluations can be made and presented.

3. Order the presentation of assignments. One way to achieve heightened involvement is to order the assignments initially and increase the complexity in succeeding lessons so that students gain familiarity with the subject matter as well as confidence in their ability to manage it. This prepares them for more difficult problems. It especially important that students get involved in the course early because students who complete the initial lessons are more likely to complete the course.

Another important way of ordering the assignments of a course is to break down complex tasks into manageable pieces. Lengthy assignments should be broken into constituent parts with the task of each part fully explained.

(Refer to Appendix 6, page 35, for examples of manageable assignments.)

4. Provide clear instructions. Of course, if the instructions for the lesson assignment are not clear, then students will have difficulty doing the work. They cannot simply call someone else in the course to check their understanding or easily call you for clarification.

To make your assignments clear, follow these suggestions:

- State precisely what you expect students to do.
- Make clear what conditions you are placing on their performance of the tasks.
- State what kind of cognitive tasks you intend for them to accomplish.

(Refer to Appendix 6, page 35, for examples of clearly presented assignments.)

Structuring Examinations

In a self-study course the examination questions and problems must be closely correlated with the material emphasized in the lessons, with the lesson objectives and with the lesson assignments. Exams can be used to promote students' learning and to more accurately evaluate their mastery of the material.

The lack of direct access to the teacher or classmates in a self-study course can generate a great deal of test anxiety when students face a final that determines their grade. Students are presented with an unknown situation. Providing a final and at least one other proctored exam gives students information about (a) the type of exams used, (b) how to prepare for the exams, and (c) how to take the exams. In addition to a mid-course exam, several self-check exams can be scheduled at regular intervals or after a series of important ideas has been studied. These self-check exams will provide students valuable information about exams as well as feedback on their mastery of the material.

Learning Aids and Format Cues

A well-structured study guide includes learning aids and format cues. Learning aids are such things as simple lists of important concepts or ideas covered in the lesson, self-check questions at the end of the lesson, graphic illustrations of ideas, references to supplementary reading material, and thought-provoking open-ended questions that relate the material to subjects and issues beyond the scope of the course. Format cues highlight important ideas and demarcate the organizational units of the material. They can be marginal notations, topical headings, and different type faces, or any other format markings used as indicators. Format cues can help learning by showing what ideas are emphasized and how these ideas are logically related. The entire study guide can follow a lay-out pattern illustrating the logical order of ideas in the same way that an outline does.

(Refer to Appendix 7, page 37, for examples of lay-out patterns that help students see relationships of ideas.)

Summary

In a well-structured course study guide, each of the parts of a lesson and the course introduction present the learning tasks to the student. The more explicitly the tasks are explained, the easier it will be for students to understand what learning the subject material means. To prepare a well-structured study guide, the course introduction and the parts of the lessons must each be written to fulfill its particular function. Each part is a marker on the road map of the course. Each directs the student toward learning the material.

Chapter 4

Providing and Maintaining Support for Students' Work

In addition to the support for independent learning provided by a well-prepared study guide, there are opportunities for you to give students more support after they have enrolled. As students work on lesson assignments and submit their work, their motivation can be reinforced through the responses you provide.

Providing Support

Written responses without any tone can easily appear to be blunt and impersonal. This is particularly true of brief, evaluative comments like one or two-word reactions. Because of the isolated conditions in which self-study students operate, you must respond to their work carefully by devoting special attention to your written feedback.

The bluntness of written comments can be tempered by couching your responses in friendly and encouraging terms. Besides your evaluation statements, add personal comments about the subject material and about the students' work. Communicate firmness in your evaluations, but encourage students to work harder and specifically indicate what they can do to improve the quality of their assignments. Always recognize work of high quality, and explain why. If a student's work is poor, suggest what could be done for improvements.

One principle to follow in evaluating students' work is to prepare comments that generate interaction with the students: Ask questions; request further explanations and responses; ask for personal views on the lessons and the subject material. By generating interaction with students, you communicate interest in their learning and gather feedback valuable for their further guidance. Establish a conversational situation with students however indirect that conversational situation may be. Generating conversation with them enables you to teach them more effectively because you are better able to engage them in the subject material and thus guide them through the course. In other words, you sustain their motivation to learn.

(Refer to Appendix 8, page 39, for examples of responses to students.)

Maintaining Support

As you work with students in your course, certain situations will arise frequently where you can respond in ways that maintain support for student learning. Here are some examples of these situations and some suggestions for handling them.

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No lessons after enrollment. The highest percentage of drop-outs and noncompletions in nontraditional, self-study courses are people who enrolled but who do not complete more than one or two lessons. Many never do a single lesson. Communicating to enrolled students who have either not submitted a lesson or not submitted more than two lessons after several months shows support.

Sometimes this will prod students into doing more work. If you invite students to respond and to admit to you that they have started, or if you ask them for questions about the course and the work, then you will be showing interest and demonstrating that the independent study course is not impersonal. This can make a difference in their interest to continue. Show them that you are aware of the difficulties involved in independent study. Many people who enroll are unfamiliar with the procedures. Requesting a return response invites students who have enrolled to get their questions answered.

Problems after the first lesson. Students almost always begin a self-study course with high expectations of completing the course and doing well. When later confronted with the actual task of learning, students may lose their early enthusiasm and not fully apply themselves. Some students will complete the first lesson, then get caught up in the ongoing circumstances of their lives and lose momentum. Still others will get discouraged after receiving a lower than anticipated grade on their first lesson's work. As a result, these students will not submit a second lesson, or a great deal of time may lapse before they attempt one.

When you *do* receive the first lesson from your students, make a special effort to review it and to prepare your response carefully. Be encouraging and supportive of their efforts. Avoid dwelling on deficiencies and mistakes, rather point out exactly *what* was wrong, *why* the mistake might have been made, and *what can be done* to improve the work. Where possible, allow students to revise and improve their work. Offer suggestions for improving both study and quality of learning efforts.

(Refer to Appendix 8, page 39, for instructor's responses to students who submitted poor first assignments.)

SUMMARY

Without the benefits of a class setting or any direct, face-to-face contact with a teacher or classmates, the sources of motivation to learn for the distance education student is his or her desire. One part of the teaching task in distance education is to use the available means to support and maintain the students desire to learn. How one performs the acts of teaching in this nontraditional content has great impact on the student's motivation. Because the contact is indirect and limited, its importance in the mind of the student is multiplied.

Conclusion

Preparing an effective self-study course requires thoroughness and careful attention to the details. It requires a commitment to the goal of teaching through the means available. This commitment is based on an appreciation of the conditions of self-study and on your intention to communicate the material and your ideas in a way that prompts and promotes learning.

When preparing a self-study course, keep the following points in mind:

- By structuring the form and content of each element of the course and by carefully coordinating the elements with each other, you will prepare communication that not only directs, but also engages, guides, and teaches.
- By agreeing to prepare a self-study course, you are accepting the challenge of using written words as a substitute for physical presence. What you include in the course study guide and how you communicate with students must not only be clear, but must convey expertise and enthusiasm.
- By remembering the difficulties students working alone face and by being sensitive to the guidance and support they need, you are better able to touch students with your words. Planned and careful preparation will lead to the development of a course students respect, enjoy, and appreciate.

We hope the suggestions in this guide will enable you to channel expertise and enthusiasm into the preparation of an outstanding independent study course.

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1. Use praise liberally when the students' work merits it.

Sociology course:

"In this answer, you covered the important issues thoroughly. You clearly studied and understood the material. Keep up the good work."

2. Carefully evaluate students' responses.

Business administration course:

"Be sure you understand the issues raised in the reading assignment; then formulate your ideas and integrate them into your answers."

Political science course:

"Although you have covered the major points here, you should formulate your own expression of the points. Do not rely so heavily on the textbook or the commentary in the study guide. Let your own understanding of the ideas be seen."

Health and safety studies course:

"You are on the right track in this answer, but you need to consider the implications of the conditions of this case more carefully and thoroughly. These are complicated issues and raise questions that need to be addressed in a careful analysis."

Mathematics course:

"Your answer demonstrates that you can grasp the essential ideas involved in these problems and that's great. Nevertheless, you need to formulate your answers more carefully so that your understanding is not obscured by poor organization and presentation."

3. Give specific suggestions to students.

Educational psychology course:

"Instead of relying totally on the cases described, reflect on how the issues arise in situations with which you are familiar."

Physics course:

"Break the problem down into small parts; then work on the parts one at a time in their logical order. This way you can see the steps needed to solve the problems."

Rhetoric course:

> "To clarify your ideas and improve your answers, give some examples of the types of cases you refer to. Give a brief description of them. These will amplify your points."

Other tips for relating to students are as follows: (a) Pointing out difficulties students are likely to experience is an important form of support. For example, you might recommend a standard method for solving a set of math problems; (b) as you become more familiar with your students' work, you can identify frequent faults in advance along with ways to avoid them. In this case, you might mention supplemental readings students tend to overlook in preparing answers to questions; and (c) in a self-study course, you should make complex points as explicit as possible. Anticipate difficulties far in advance and prepare your students to overcome these difficulties.

Appendix 2

Specifying Goals, Expectations, and Requirements

1. Specifying goals.

Accounting course:

"The goal of this course is for you to comprehend and know how to apply the fundamental principles of accounting."

Psychology course:

"By completing this course successfully, you will acquire an understanding of the areas of psychology and of the basic concepts of the field."

2. Specifying expectations.

Business writing course:

"This aim of this course is to provide you an opportunity to learn and to practice the principles of clear, concise, and accurate business report writing."

Business administration course:

"You will be expected to demonstrate the application of the principles in your analyses."

Literature course:

"I expect you to formulate your own position and support it with examples drawn from the readings."

Mathematics course:

"I expect you to figure each problem in a neat, clearly legible form."

Political science course:

"I expect you to identify the principles in use in the cases we are considering."

History course:

"My expectation is that you will understand and be able to recognize the causes of change in each of the historical periods."

3. Specifying requirements.

Mathematics course:

"Each lesson will include an assignment. Each assignment will list problems to be solved. Only the problems with a star should be

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submitted for evaluation, but it is important that you practice solving as many of them as you can. Exam problems will be taken from the entire group."

Health science course:

"You must answer the questions for each lesson in your own words."

French course:

"You are required to complete three of the four hour exams."

Political science course:

"Each lesson contains an assignment section consisting of 10 short-answer identity questions and 5 essay questions. In each assignment, answer only 3 essay questions for submission."

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Course Introductions

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1. Example of an introduction to a course in business administration.

Preface

This course is designed for students who have the equivalent of senior status at four-year undergraduate colleges. It presupposes an introduction to the business core subjects of accounting, finance, economics, marketing, management, and production (or their equivalent in experience) beyond that provided by elementary survey courses. No assumption is made, however, as to how recent one's exposure to these courses has been. Consequently, each lesson includes a commentary that provides an orientation to the particular subject matter which is the focus of the assignment. These orientations are intended to refresh the student's memory; they are not intended to serve as a substitute for formal course work or business experience. Those, whose formal exposure to the course work of a given lesson has been recent or whose practical experience experience renders such a subject matter review unnecessary, are at liberty to ignore the commentary and proceed directly to the written assignment.

The reading assignments and their accompanying cases are designed to bridge the gap between the academic world and the world of business. Unfortunately, there is no unanimity of opinion as to how this can best be done. While there appears to be general agreement that the proper vehicle for the task of bridging principle and practice is planning, the subject of planning itself is plagued by problems of definitions. Policy, for example, is regarded by some authorities as constituting a set of directions or a statement of intent that is formulated at the highest echelon of an organization. It defines how the enterprise will endeavor to change and grow over the long run. Those who espouse this view of policy consider strategy as an implementing plan designed to enforce policy and make it effective. In this context, policy planning tends to be a more prolonged and deliberate process than strategic planning. Policies tend to be in force over longer periods than strategies because they provide the stability, focus, and operational consistency characteristic of a smoothly functioning enterprise. By contrast, strategy would be subject to change any time its effectiveness in implementing policy fell short of management's expectations. This conception of the policy-strategy relationship tends to be associated with the public sector.

This course assumes a middle ground in that it treats the total planning process. Regardless of what labels one prefers, any organization that

cherishes survival must have a plan which reaches far enough into the future to identify the most inviting opportunities as well as the most ominous threats. Such plans require extensive research and generally embrace an extended time frame. Because an organization must operate from day to day as well as from one decade to the next, such a plan can be effective only if it is supported by a structure of more detailed plans applied to shorter time horizons. It is the nature and scope of this structure that is addressed in this course. The intent is to do so with a minimum of technical jargon and a maximum use of contemporary case illustrations.

Course Description

The perspective and orientation of this course is that of the entire firm as viewed from the perspective of its chief executive officer (CEO). While the CEO may not be the chief planning officer of a firm, particularly a large one, he or she nevertheless has ultimate responsibility for the planning function. In recognition of this perspective, the course content is divided into five sections, each of which examines a major aspect of the total planning process. The first section addresses the major concepts and ideas of planning itself and the way these are applied in the management of business enterprise. The different functions performed by plans, the elements of the planning process, the planning structure, and the planning cycle are treated.

The second section concerns long-range planning and the concept of the corporate destination. It examines such questions as the kind of business a firm should seek to become, what criteria should be followed in shaping that decision, what type of analysis should be undertaken, and what questions this analysis should seek to answer.

Establishing intermediate objectives that represent milestones in the firm's progress toward its long-range objectives (its destination) and formulating the various action sequences designed to fulfill these intermediate objectives is the subject of the third section. Here the concept of strategic planning is introduced, as is the idea of corporate (major) and functional (minor) strategies or programs. Material illustrating survival, growth, diversification, and imitative strategies is introduced along with that illustrating offensive and defensive strategies.

The final section treats organizational planning as the avenue through which physical, financial, and human resources are combined with an information system to provide an effective implementing function. If it is to respond well to the demands placed upon it, organizational structure must be shaped by the anticipation of these demands.

Grades

The final exam will count 20% of the final course grade. Grades on all lesson assignments averaged together count 80% of the final course grade..

Instructional Techniques

Certain lessons will also require written analyses of case studies as well as reports on field projects. A business case is typically a record of a business issue which actually has been faced by business executives, together with surrounding facts, opinions, and prejudices upon which the executives had to depend. These real and particularized situations are present to students for their study, analysis, and final decision as to the type of action to be taken.

The rationale of the method. The case method of instruction centers around the development of independent, constructive thinking on the part of the student. This is achieved through an analysis of possibilities, probabilities, and expedients—the possibilities inherent in various combinations of facts, the probabilities of human reactions, and the expedients most likely to bring about the response in others that lead to a definite and desirable end.

Use of the case method. The analysis of a case generally involves three parts of phases: perception of the total situation, isolation and diagnosis of "the problem," and selection of the best course of action to follow. These three phases embrace at least the following steps:

1. An ordering of the information presented in the case.
2. Defining the problem or problems.
3. Isolating pieces of information that might have crucial importance.
4. Listing the alternative actions the company might take to meet the central problem faced by the firm under review.

2. Example of an introduction to a French course.

The course emphasizes all aspects of learning a foreign language: reading, comprehension, writing, oral comprehension, and expression. By the end of the course, you should be able to understand and actively use a substantial amount of French.

Instructions are found in the body of the syllabus. See also the general directions *preceding* this introduction.

There are many translations in this course. The "rule" is: Stick to the French text you are translating as closely as you can. But make sure that your translation is coherent and idiomatic. In some cases, a word-for-word, slavish translation may come out as peculiar English. In such cases, take liberties, perhaps paraphrase instead of translating. In all cases, you should always read your own text objectively, although someone else had written it, to ensure that it is good English.

You should have an English-French, French-English dictionary. How big, ambitious, or expensive the dictionary depends on your needs, on your background, and on your budget. You can get one for very little (second-hand, on sale, etc.). Good inexpensive paperback dictionaries are the *Bantam New College French-English Dictionary* (published by Steiner's) and *Harrap's* smallish (pocket) dictionary, which is excellent. Cassell's hardback is more ambitious and more costly as is the large *Harrap's*, probably the top of the line in its category. But probably any dictionary you can find will do the job.

Each assignment is corrected as soon as possible. Each lesson, as you prepare it, and as it comes back to you with comments, serves as a kind of self-test. You should be constantly checking on past lessons because every lesson builds on all those lessons preceding it. Learning a language is like constructing a building: You can't build the middle of a structure if you don't have the bottom part for it, nor the top if you don't have both a middle and a base.

I avoid putting letter grades on assignments. I prefer comments. It is not easy to pinpoint a grade for each assignment in this type of course. But certainly, if I write "This is excellent!," that's just like saying "This is an A paper." And if I ask you to resubmit, that probably means the lesson is of D or E quality; however, I may ask someone with even a B or C quality paper to resubmit because I sense that the writer would profit from trying again.

The final examination grade does get a letter-grade. Based on a scale of zero to 100, my grading scale is as follows:

100-90 points:	A+ to A-
89-80	B+ to B-
79-70	C+ to C-
69-60	D+ to D-
59-50	E, or Fail
Below 49	Too horrible to contemplate

The final examination grade weighs heavily in the calculation of the grade given for the entire course. However, I do not base grades entirely on the final.

Do your very best work for every single lesson you prepare and send in. Some smart people may have trouble, either because they have some kind of block (it's very rare, but it could happen) or because they've gone stale, they've forgotten much of what they previously learned, or they lack a solid background.

In such cases, if major reviewing (relearning or learning from scratch) does not do the trick, there's nothing wrong, dishonest, or illegal with getting additional help from a tutor, from a friend who knows French, etc.

If this happens, just make sure that your helper helps but doesn't do the work *you* ought to be doing, for you'll be entirely on your own when you take the final examination.

You have read all these instructions, all the information, up to this point. And you may be getting dizzy and feeling as if you are a 90-year-old grandpa or grandma trying to learn how to use a computer and word processor. Relax. Procedures seem complicated because so many instructions are crammed into this introduction, 90% of which is common sense. All this must be said now because of the type of course this is; in a classroom, the instructor probably says ten times as much in the first few meetings, but because this is said and not written, it doesn't sound so forbidding. Just plunge in, and by the time you've done one or two assignments, you'll be laughing at your worries—if you ever had any.

So, *bonne chance et au revoir*.

Your Instructor

Appendix 4

Stating Lesson Objectives

The following objectives show how students can be informed of what they will accomplish after finishing a lesson.

Health education course:

"After completing this lesson, you should be able to describe the structure and function of the major parts of the human eye."

Patient education course:

"Once you complete this lesson, you will know the basic elements of patient education planning. Next, you will apply your knowledge to planning a program."

Business administration course:

"In this lesson you will examine several instances of companies changing strategies. You should be able to recognize and describe the conditions common in these cases."

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Appendix 5

Lesson Commentaries: Effective Transitions

1. Transitions among lessons.

International business course:

"In the preceding lesson, you were introduced to the area of international marketing. Now, we will begin to examine the specific features of this area. In this lesson we will focus on the environment of international marketing."

Health and safety course:

"With every first-aid procedure from this lesson on, you will be instructed to be aware of and to care for shock. However, shock itself can be a primary life-threatening problem. For this reason, shock is addressed here immediately following basic life support."

Psychology course:

"As your text indicates, the study of human development across the entire life span is a difficult enterprise. A researcher has the problem of deciding between a longitudinal or cross-sectional research design. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the basic elements of each type of research design and the advantages and disadvantages of each."

2. Transitions that build continuity.

Computer science course:

"In the previous few lessons, you learned some fundamental commands for programming in BASIC. In the next three lessons, you will study a different topic: loops. As you will see, loops enable you to present problems involving series of variables. After considering loops, we will review the fundamental commands, then integrate them with the material on loops. You will then be ready to prepare some programs for solving problems.

Statistics course:

"We now consider two cases which, if they are in effect, change our calculations of the probabilities covered in the last lesson on probability rules. You should be careful, however, to use the general

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formulas noted in the last lesson unless you are certain a special case exists. To make that determination, you need to work through this lesson."

3. Present a personal approach.

Literature course:

"The ideas in this lesson are fundamental to the remaining lessons in the course. The following is my explanation of these ideas and their relation to each other. My explanations are simpler than those of the textbook, but read both and formulate your own using examples from your experience. You can present your explanation as part of your written assignment."

Sociology course:

"In this first lesson and the next three, I have outlined the content of the lessons so you can see how I am connecting the ideas. After Lesson 4 you should be able to outline the lessons yourself, an activity that should reinforce the material and help you learn the major ideas."

Math course:

"This is a particularly difficult lesson. Students frequently find the ideas here hard to grasp. It may take you somewhat longer to complete this lesson, but do not be discouraged. Study carefully and try each question, then send the assignment in. If you do not finish it, I will return it with some hints and suggestions for further work. If you have questions, be sure to include them with your written assignment."

Appendix 6
Examples of Assignments

1. Here are examples of assignments that require students to analyze and to use material.

Psychology course:

"Compare and contrast the concepts of learned helplessness and self-efficacy."

Business administration course:

"As in a real-life adult situation, you will begin your analysis of changes in the company's gross profit ratio with little given information. You must determine what information you need for your judgments and draw it from the company reports provided."

Educational psychology course:

"Select two of the three cases presented in the chapter and discuss which principles and characteristics of therapy are illustrated in each case."

2. Here are some examples of breaking down lengthy assignments into manageable tasks.

Business and technical writing course:

"Lessons 1 - 8 cover the basic elements of business reports. This assignment is from Lesson 8. Now you are ready to write the first long report. For your report, be sure to include the following: title page, letter of transmittal, table of contents, and the introduction you have already written, as well as the body of the report. Whether you will need other parts (e.g., appendices, bibliography, lists of tables) will be completely dependent on the nature of the problem. In the next lesson you will be asked to write an abstract for this report."

Advertising course:

"In the role of management trainee for a major city department store of your choice, you have drawn the assignment of comparing your firm's newspaper advertising with two of its competitors. The store wants a complete picture of it as well as the competition's advertising campaigns. This information will be used to evaluate your firm's own advertising efforts."

"Your job is to gather the information you need for the study from a careful inspection of all major newspapers carrying advertising for the three stores for a two-week period. Describe what you would

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look for and explain how you would compare the advertising of your company's competitors."

3. Here are two examples of clearly presented assignments:

Lesson 5 - Assignment

Psychology course -

To be written out and submitted:

In a brief paragraph or two, define or explain each of the following:

Herzberg's motivation - hygiene theory

Maslov's hierarchy of needs

equity theory

Lesson 12 - Assignment

Business administration course -

Prepare and send in:

Analyze the case study "Thompson's Policy Changes" according to the procedures for case analysis given in the "Introduction" of your course study guide. State four reasons why Thompson's innovations failed.

Appendix 7
Learning Aids and Format Cues

1. Example from a child psychology course.

AUTISM

General Definition

In this chapter various aspects of the physical, cognitive, and social development of human begins are discussed. Early infantile autism, one of the most bizarre and serious psychological disorders to occur during childhood, has been viewed by some theorists as resulting from a massive disruption in the normal attachment process. Although the topic of behavior disorders has not been covered at this point in the course (it will be covered in detail in Chapter 15), a discussion of early infantile autism (or autism for short) meshes well with the discussion of the attachment process presented in this chapter.

Symptoms

Autism, first systematically described and studied by Leo Kanner in 1943, is an extremely rare disorder. The following three basic symptoms are viewed as characteristic of this disorder:

1. *Social isolation.* The autistic child displays an extreme inability to relate to other human beings, preferring to remain aloof, alone, and self-absorbed.
2. *Communication deficits.* In infancy, the autistic child's babbling is less frequent and less meaningful than that of other "normal" children.
3. *Preservation of sameness.* Autistic children usually display an anxious and obsessive desire to maintain sameness in their environment.

Causes

The cause of autism is not well understood. Various etiological theories have been proposed, including neurological dysfunction, biochemical abnormalities, and emotional aloofness and rejection of the child on the part of the parents.

2. Example from a statistics course.

3.6 Probability Rules

This section covers methods for determining the probability of one

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type of event given the probabilities of the occurrence of other types of events.

Complements (pp. 104-105). The usefulness of this rule is illustrated by Newbold's example.

Addition Rule (Union) (pp. 105-106). Another way of understanding this rule is to consider the probability of obtaining either king or club or both from a deck of cards.

Mutually exclusive events (pp. 85, 109-110). If two events are mutually exclusive, the probability of their intersection is zero as is the conditional probability of one's occurring given the other.

Statistically independent events (pp. 109-112). This is a new concept. As Newbold explains on page 109, it is most easily seen by considering conditional probabilities.

Appendix 8
Responses to Students

1. Here are two examples of written responses to students.

Literature course:

"Were you more busy than usual since you submitted your last lesson? Your answers aren't as thorough as I'm used to seeing. Try to expand your answers to Questions 3 and 5 and resubmit them before you move on to the next exercises. Getting the material in this lesson well in hand will be important on the next several lessons. Tell me what you think of the questions in this exercise. Do they cover the material of the lesson fully?"

Business administration course:

"Great job of covering the major ideas of the case. You really grasped the conditions of the environment. However, you omitted consideration of several details involved in Part 2. These are especially important! Send me a brief analysis of them with your next lesson. Again, be sure to prepare an outline for your answer; then you won't miss the details."

2. Compare the above responses to the following inappropriate ones.

Literature course:

"Unclear and poorly constructed answers. You obviously did not read carefully enough."

Business administration course:

"Rewrite this answer. I can't understand anything you've written."

3. Example of a response to a student who submitted no lesson after enrolling.

"Hello. I'm your instructor for _____.Welcome to the course. I have carefully prepared the course for independent study students like you. You enrolled (*date*), but I've noticed that you have not turned in any lessons as yet. I want to encourage you to try the first four lessons. They will introduce you to the course and will help you get started. I want to help, too. If you have questions about the course or about doing the work, please ask me. I've included a stamped envelope for your response. Inde-

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pendent study is not an easy way to learn, but by planning carefully and by applying yourself to the learning, the task is manageable."

4. ***Example of a response to a student who submitted a poor first lesson.***

"This is my evaluation of your first assignment. Keep in mind that getting started in independent learning is no easy task. No learning is particularly easy, but it can be a challenging and rewarding experience. You have made your first effort; now you can proceed through the course and toward improving your learning skills.

Your answers in this assignment are difficult for me to grasp fully, and I want to explain why. I also want to explain how I evaluated your work and where to go from here.

Although you have clearly understood the major points of the lesson (the points covered in the first two lessons objectives), your answers are not sufficiently detailed and the structure of your sentences is poor. The details of the lesson mentioned in Objectives 3 to 5 are not discussed, as far as I can tell. Deciding whether they were discussed or not was difficult because of the way you have written your answers. Your statements are frequently not in sentence form, and there is no particular order to the ideas presented.

I want you to rewrite three of your answers. I have marked the three that need attention. Review the reading assignment and concentrate on picking up the details associated with the major ideas. One way of accomplishing this is to make an outline of the ideas as you read. If you do this on several lessons, you will begin to do this mentally as you read. Further, write a draft of your answers, then review and edit it. Make sure you use complete sentences. Put your ideas in logical order, outline what you want to include in your answer, and follow the outline in your answer. If you follow this procedure, then not only will the quality of your work improve, but you will also learn and remember more of the material. At least try this procedure for your revision of this lesson and for the next two lessons.

If you have any questions about this procedure or about the course, let me know. Don't be discouraged! You are just getting started and learning much that is new. Work hard on your revision. Make an effort to establish a regular study routine. Complete manageable pieces of the work as you can and before you know it, you will have finished another lesson! Getting

started is not easy, but once your study routine is set, you can accomplish much valuable work. If I can be of any assistance, please let me know."

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